United Nations A/57/695

General Assembly

Distr.: General
24 December 2002

Original: English

Fifty-seventh session
Agenda item 25 (a)
Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 12 December 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to request your assistance in having the attached statement (see annex) circulated to Member States as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 25 (a).

(*Signed*) Anthony C. **Rolle**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

02-75795 (E) 271202

Annex to the letter dated 12 December 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Mr. President:

With reference to the comments made by the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations in his statement this morning on agenda item 25, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea", I wish to take this opportunity to place on record the position of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas with respect to the sinking of the *Prestige* and the oil spill off of the coast of Spain.

The Bahamas deeply regrets the environmental and social damage occasioned by the sinking of the *Prestige*. However, it wishes to assure this Assembly that The Bahamas' action in respect of the *Prestige* was fully in accordance with its respect for the marine environment and its responsibility as flag State. The Bahamas remains fully cognizant of its responsibilities as a flag State and its actions demonstrate the commitment of the Government to preserve its integrity.

The records show that, with respect to the condition of the vessel, the vessel was subjected to a special survey in China in 2001, and in May 2002, a further survey was undertaken which indicated that there were no statutory deficiencies and no outstanding class recommendations. Every indication, therefore, showed that the vessel was in sound condition.

The Bahamas is committed to continuing its efforts to upgrade shipping standards and ensure the integrity of its ship registry.

The Bahamas has initiated a series of measures designed to deal with the fundamental causes of accidents involving structural failures, especially in tankers and bulk carriers, and had introduced these measures at the International Maritime Organization even prior to the *Prestige* incident.

The Government of The Bahamas reiterates that maritime safety remains of critical importance, and has consequently launched a thorough investigation of the causes and circumstances surrounding the *Prestige* loss.

We wish to note that at present all indications are that repairs to the ship were carried out to the highest industry standards, but our investigation team will be exploring all other matters pertaining to the vessel, including with respect to its design and age.

The Bahamas continues to fulfil all of its international obligations under the appropriate conventions and we would urge the concerned States that they, too, should take the action required by them in fulfilment of their obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other international conventions, in order to ensure the preservation of the marine environment.

12 December 2002